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# The Round Tablette

*Founding Editor: James W. Gerber, MD (1951–2009)*

25th Anniversary

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Thursday, 12 January 2012

**Happy New Year and welcome to the January meeting of the Harold C.**

**Deutsch World War II History Round**

**Table.** Once again this year we return to the Russian Front and a chilly topic, the Battle of Leningrad. Although given our winter so far, the topic will be colder than our Minnesota weather outside. Tonight's speaker is Jonathan House, who co-authored with David Glantz, *When Titans Clashed*, along with Russian veterans from the Battle of Leningrad.

In June 1941, in Operation Barbarossa, the German *Wehrmacht* invaded the Soviet Union. Adolf Hitler was determined to destroy the Soviet Union and gain *Lebensraum* for the German people. One of Hitler's main targets was the city of Leningrad, once and now St. Petersburg. Situated on the Baltic Sea, it was the main base of the Soviet Baltic Fleet. By 1939 the city produced 11% of the Soviet Union's industrial output.

As Operation Barbarossa began, Field Marshall Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb's Army Group North raced north and east towards Leningrad. Hitler was so certain of victory that he already had the celebration invitation printed. As the

Germans moved north and east, Finnish forces under Marshal Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim moved south, recapturing land that had been lost in the earlier Russo-Finnish War. Von Leeb's plan was to capture the city quickly, but strong Soviet resistance and Hitler's transfer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Group to Army Group Center for the attack on Moscow forced him to besiege the city.

In Leningrad preparations began as soon as the German attack was announced. The Council of Deputies organized civilians to construct fortifications. Over a million citizens were mobilized and several lines of defense were built along the perimeter of the city.

Neither side wanted or was prepared for a siege, especially one that lasted 872 days, from September 1941 to January 1944. Estimates vary, but by the end of the siege anywhere 632,000 to 1,500,000 soldiers and civilians were thought to have perished. (At least 630,000 died on both sides in the four years of the American Civil War.) For both sides the weather took its toll. German forces were not issued winter clothing because it was thought Operation Barbarossa would be done quickly, and they froze with the onset of winter. Leningrad sits at 59° N latitude (St. Paul, Minnesota is at 45°N latitude). If one travels straight north from St. Paul, to the same latitude as Leningrad, one ends up near the mouth of Hudson's Bay, certainly more

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fertile ground for polar bears than a battle.

On 8 September 1941, supply routes were cut off and until December 1941 the city starved. Tenuous supply routes were finally opened up across Lake Ladoga with barges and boats in the summer time. When the lake iced over, land vehicles were able to get across. However, there was always the threat of attack along this route. Even with these supplies, starvation ruled. Dogs, cats, birds, and rats disappeared from the city in the winter of 1941-1942. Freshly buried bodies were dug up and eaten, and special police units were formed to combat cannibalism.

Leningrad proved to be the most devastating siege in human history in terms of casualties and destruction of property.

### Further Reading:

David M. Glantz and Jonathan House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1998)

David M Glantz, *The Battle of Leningrad, 1941-1944* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002)

Michael Jones, *Leningrad: State of Siege* (New York: Basic Books, 2008)

Anna Reid, *Leningrad: The Epic Siege of World War II 1941-1944* (New York: Walker Publishing Company, 2011)

### Announcements:

**Twin Cities Civil War Round Table** -

Jan. 17, 2012 Grant & Lincoln Win the War  
[www.tccwrt.com](http://www.tccwrt.com) - 612-724-3849

**St Croix Valley Civil War Round Table** -

Jan. 23, 2012, Herman Haupt USMRR - Steve Anderson - 715-386-1268

**Rochester WWII History Round Table** – Feb. 13, 2012 Escaping Ambush in Korea, 507-280-9970; [www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org](http://www.wv2roundtable-rochester.org)

**Minnesota Military Museum**, Camp Ripley, 15000 Hwy 115, Little Falls, MN 56345, 320-616-6050, <http://www.mnmilitarymuseum.org/>  
**Air Show - Eden Prairie** - <http://www.airexpo-mn.org/> - 952-746-6100  
July, 14-15, 2012

**Honor Flight** - Jerry Kyser - [crazyjerry45@hotmail](mailto:crazyjerry45@hotmail.com) - 651-338-2717

**CAF - Commemorative Air Force** - [www.cafmn.org](http://www.cafmn.org) or Bill at 952-201-8400

**Minnesota Air Guard Museum** - [www.mnangmuseum.org](http://www.mnangmuseum.org) 612-713-252

Friends of Ft. Snelling, [www.fortsnelling.com](http://www.fortsnelling.com)

### Round Table Schedule 2011-2012

#### 2012

Feb 9 Code breaking and Computers

Mar 8 OPERATION PLUM 27<sup>th</sup> BG

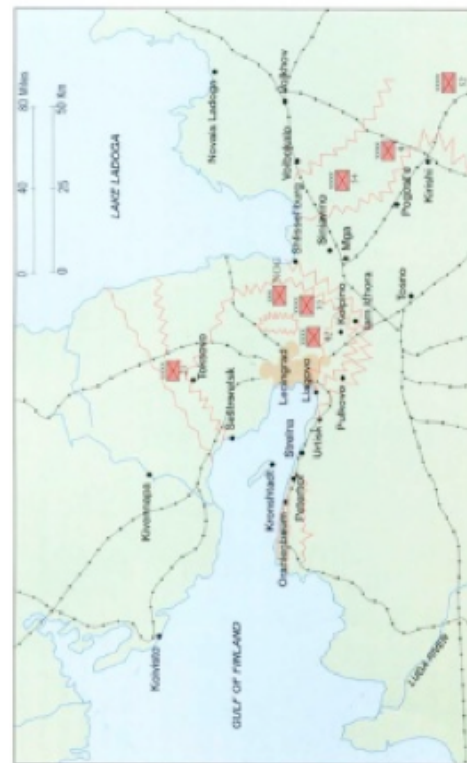
Mar 22 Japan's Mistake: Starting the War

Apr 12 Jedburgs-Jumping Behind Enemy Lines

May 10 Battle of Leyte Gulf

**If you are a veteran of one of these campaigns** – or know a veteran, contact Don Patton [coldpatton@yahoo.com](mailto:coldpatton@yahoo.com)

*This is our 25<sup>th</sup> Year!*



*Leningrad's defenses, 21 Dec 2941*

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